

Mr. Cavin

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART
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News release

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WASHINGTON, March 14, 1953. David E. Finley, Director, announces the opening on March 15th at the National Gallery of Art of a special exhibition, "Nuremberg and the German World, 1460-1530." The exhibition will continue through April.

Recently the church of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg, Germany, presented to Mr. Rush H. Kress, in recognition of the restoration of the church, an early 16th century German manuscript choral in two volumes. These giant choir books, which Mr. Kress has placed in the custody of the National Gallery of Art, are now on view for the first time in this country. They occupy the central position in this exhibition.

The two large folios are written on vellum, a fine quality and highly polished animal skin, and are bound in contemporary pigskin with brass ornaments and clasps. They contain the liturgy and choir responses for the year. The volumes are richly illustrated with single miniatures and elaborate floral borders in which often appear charming genre or satirical subjects. The manuscript for generations has been called the "Geesebook" (Gänsebuch), since there is a representation of a wolf beside a pulpit teaching some geese to sing, while on the other side a fox is attacking one of the geese.

The miniatures in both volumes were done by Jakob Elsner, a distinguished illuminator who died in Nuremberg in 1517. He worked first for Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony and, later, for the Kress family. According to two Latin inscriptions inside the binding the volumes were made in 1507-1510 for the church of St. Lawrence in Nuremberg, probably on the personal initiative of Dr. Anton Kress, an ancestor of the Kress family in America. He was a jurist of note and distinguished patron of the arts and, at that time, Provost of the church.

An exhibition of German Graphic Art of the late 15th and early 16th centuries has been assembled from the Lessing J. Rosenwald collection as an interesting background for the

new acquisition. Jakob Elsner, was brought up in the Nuremberg tradition. An accomplished musician, an intimate friend of the patricians of the city, he was also familiar with the work of such men as Schongauer, Pleydenwurff, Wolgemut and Dürer. The exhibition has been arranged to include engravings and woodcuts which Elsner might have known and also to give an idea of the world in which he moved. There are rare woodcuts by Pleydenwurff and Wolgemut, a series of beautiful engravings by Schongauer and a number of outstanding prints by Albrecht Dürer. Intimate scenes from daily life are to be seen in a set of engravings by Israhel van Meckenem. A hitherto unknown engraving of the city of Nuremberg is dated 1502. Also included in this wealth of graphic art are the seldom found woodcuts of the coats of arms of the city of Nuremberg and those of a number of burghers. The exhibition is rich in historical material and in folklore. It represents the waning of the northern Gothic and presages the Reformation.

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